IN THE CLAIMS:

Following is a replacement claim set:

1.   (currently amended) A computer implemented method, comprising:
maintaining identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;
maintaining a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

communicating a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

receiving responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

determining the cumulative support from the query responses received; ~~and~~
automatically communicating a second query to the plurality of decision-making entities if an additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint value is less than a second setpoint; and

automatically implementing the proposed action if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint by transmitting an instruction to one or more trading networks.

2.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising: ~~communicating messages to one or more of the decision making entities~~

imposing arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint value.

3.   (cancelled)

4.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the indication of support is of a type selected from qualitative, quantitative, functional or a combination thereof.

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5.   (currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein the step of automatically implementing the decision includes transmitting an instruction to one or more trading networks~~ further comprising:
        sending a communication to each of the plurality of decision-making entities stating an amount of additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint.

6.   (currently amended) ~~The method of claim 1, further comprising:~~ A computer implemented method, comprising:
        maintaining identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;
        maintaining a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;
        communicating a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;
        receiving responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;
        determining the cumulative support from the query responses received;
        automatically implementing the proposed action if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint;
        imposing arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint value;
        communicating the cumulative support to the plurality of decision-making entities;
        communicating a second query based on this cumulative support;
        receiving responses to the second query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each of the second responses include a revised indication of support;
        determining a revised cumulative support for the second query incorporating the revised indications of support; and
        implementing the decision if the revised cumulative support is greater than the minimum setpoint.

7.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
        initiating an intra-group caucus between a plurality of the decision-making entities.

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8.   (currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 6, wherein the identification of each decision-making entity includes a weighting factor, the step of determining the cumulative support further includes: further comprising:

~~receiving a request from one of the decision-making entities to initiate a query, wherein the request includes the proposed action~~

applying the weighting factor against each indicator of support for the decision.

9.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the query is formulated by one of the plurality of decision-making entities and transmitted to a central coordinator for subsequent communication to the plurality of decision-making entities.

10.   (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the setpoint is established by the decision-making entity that formulates the query.

11.   (cancelled)

12.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the identification of each decision-making entity includes a weighting factor; and wherein the step of determining the cumulative support includes applying the weighting factor against each indicator of support for the decision.

13.   (currently amended) The method of claim [[5]] 6, further comprising:
        sending a communication to each of the plurality of decision-making entities stating the an amount of additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint.

14.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the query responses include weighting factors or other criteria relevant to the level of support.

15.   (currently amended) The method of claim [[13]] 6, further comprising:

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automatically communicating a second query to the plurality of decision-making entities if the additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint value is less than a[[n]] second setpoint.

16.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

querying one of the plurality of decision-making entities for authorization to implement the decision if the query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint.

17.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining approval or denial to implement the decision.

18.   (currently amended) ~~The method of claim 1, further comprising:~~ A computer implemented method, comprising:

maintaining identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;

maintaining a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

communicating a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

receiving responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

determining the cumulative support from the query responses received; and

automatically implementing the proposed action if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint;

communicating the cumulative support to the plurality of decision-making entities;

~~formulating~~ communicating a second query based on this cumulative support;

receiving responses to the second query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each of the second responses include a revised indication of support;

determining a revised cumulative support for the second query incorporating the revised indications of support; and

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implementing the decision if the revised cumulative support is greater than the minimum setpoint.

19.   (currently amended) A computer program product including <u>computer readable</u> instructions embodied on a computer readable medium, ~~the instructions comprising~~ <u>wherein the computer readable instructions when executed on a computer cause the computer to perform steps comprising:</u>

~~maintaining instructions for~~ maintain <s>ing</s> identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;

~~maintaining instructions for~~ maintain <s>ing</s> a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

~~communicating instructions for~~ communicate<u>e</u> <s>ing</s> a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

~~receiving instructions for~~ receive<u>e</u> <s>ing</s> responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

~~determining instructions for~~ determine<u>e</u> <s>ing</s> the cumulative support from the query responses received; ~~and~~

<u>automatically communicate a second query to the plurality of decision-making entities if an additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint is less than a second setpoint; and</u>

~~implementing instructions for~~ automatically implement <s>ing</s> the decision if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint<u>, including transmit an instruction to one or more trading networks</u>.

20.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising: ~~communicating instructions for communicating messages to one or more of the decision-making entities~~

<u>impose arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint.</u>

21.   (cancelled)

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22.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising: ~~instructions for~~ formulat_e ~~ing~~ a decision of a type selected from qualitative, quantitative, functional or a combination of decisions thereof.

23.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 19, ~~wherein the implementing instructions include transmitting instruction for transmitting an instruction to one or more trading networks~~ further comprising:

send a communication to each of the plurality of decision-making entities stating an amount of additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint.

24.   (currently amended) ~~The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:~~ A computer program product including computer readable instructions embodied on a computer readable medium, wherein the computer readable instructions when executed on a computer cause the computer to perform steps comprising:

maintain identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;

maintain a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;

communicate a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

receive responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action;

determine the cumulative support from the query responses received;

automatically implement the decision if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint;

impose arbitration among the plurality of decision-making entities if the query responses provide cumulative support less than the minimum setpoint; and

automatically communicate a second query to the plurality of decision-making entities if the additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint is less than a second setpoint.

25.   (currently amended) The of claim 19, further comprising

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~~caucusing instructions for~~ initiate ~~ing~~ an intra-group caucus between a plurality of the decision-making entities.

26.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim [[19]] 24, further comprising:
~~initiating instructions for allowing one of the decision-making entity to initiate a query~~
maintain a weighting factor for each of the decision-making entities; and
apply the weighting factor for each of the decision-making entities against the indicator of support received from the corresponding decision-making entity.

27.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 26, further comprising:
~~identifying instructions for~~ identify ~~ing~~ a query that is formulated by one of the plurality of decision-making entities; and

~~transmitting instructions for~~ transmit ~~ting~~ the query to the plurality of decision-making entities.

28.   (original) The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:
~~identifying instructions for~~ identify ~~ing~~ a setpoint established by the decision-making entity that formulated the query.

29.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim [[19]] 24, further comprising:
~~wherein implementing instructions for implementing the decision comprise transmitting instructions for transmitting an electronic communication to a third party~~
communicate the cumulative support to the plurality of decision-making entities;
communicate a second query based on this cumulative support;
receive responses to the second query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each of the second responses include a revised indication of support;
determine a revised cumulative support for the second query incorporating the revised indications of support; and
implement the decision if the revised cumulative support is greater than the minimum setpoint value.

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30.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:

~~maintaining instructions for~~ maintain ~~ing~~ a weighting factor for each of the decision-making entities; and

~~applying instructions for~~ apply ~~ing~~ the weighting factor for each of the decision-making entities against the indication of support received from the corresponding decision-making entity.

31.   (currently amended) The computer program product of claim 24, further comprising:

~~transmitting instructions for~~ transmit ~~ting~~ [[the]] an amount of additional support necessary to reach the minimum setpoint value to each of the plurality of decision-making entities.

32.   (original) The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the indication of support provides a graduated level of support.

33.   (cancelled)

34.   (original) The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:

~~generating instructions for~~ generate ~~ing~~ a query to one of the plurality of decision-making entities for authorization to implement the decision if the query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint.

35.   (currently amended) ~~The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising:~~ A computer program product including computer readable instructions embodied on a computer readable medium, wherein the computer readable instructions when executed on a computer cause the computer to perform steps comprising:

maintain identification for a group of decision-making entities in a memory device;
maintain a setpoint representing a minimum cumulative support required to implement a proposed action;
communicate a query to the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the query includes a description of the proposed action;

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receive responses to the query from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein each response includes an indicator of support for the proposed action:

determine the cumulative support from the query responses received;

automatically implement the decision if the cumulative support is greater than the setpoint;

~~transmitting instructions for~~ communicate ~~ing~~ the cumulative response to the plurality of decision-making entities;

~~transmitting instructions for formulating~~ communicate a second query based on this cumulative response;

~~transmitting instructions for~~ communicate ~~ing~~ second responses from the plurality of decision-making entities, wherein the second responses comprise revised weighting factors;

~~transmitting instructions for~~ determine ~~ing~~ the cumulative response to the second query incorporating the revised weighting factors; and

~~implementing instructions for~~ implement ~~ing~~ the decision if the second query responses provide cumulative support greater than the minimum setpoint value.

36.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein one or more of the plurality of decision-making entities communicates through a personal digital assistant.

37.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the communications occur over a wireless network.

38.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the communications utilize instant messaging.

39.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a collaboration manager to interface between decision-making entities having different computer platforms or applications.

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